

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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TAGS: CI, PINT, SCUL

SUBJECT: OUSTING OF CATHOLIC TV DIRECTOR WITH STRONG
ANTI-ALLENDE RECORD LIKELY TO WORSEN JUNTA RELATIONS
WITH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL LEADERS.

USIA FOR ILA/IPS

1. SUMMARY: CONFLICT ERUPTS AT CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY TV
CHANNEL 13. CHANNEL DIRECTOR REV. RAUL HASBUN, OTHER LEADING
PERSONNEL RESIGN AS RESULT CONFLICT WITH MILITARY RECTOR
DELEGATE ADMIRAL JORGE SWETT. SWETT SENT HASBUN LETTER CLAIMING
IRREGULARITIES IN CHANNEL MANAGEMENT, DEMANDING CERTAIN
INDIVIDUALS BE FIRED, CHANNEL PROGRAMMING AND ENTIRE PERSONNEL
REORGANIZED. HASBUN RESPONDED WITH COPY TO JUNTA MEMBERS,
CARDINAL, PAPAL NUNCIO. WHILE SOME OBSERVERS WERE BETTING HASBUN
WOULD BE WINNER IN CONFRONTATION, HE ANNOUNCED RESIGNATION
LATE MARCH 26. OUTCOME STILL NOT CLEAR, BUT OUTLOOK FOR
JUNTA'S RELATIONS WITH CATHOLIC AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC
LEADERS DEFINITELY CLOUDED. END SUMMARY.

2. IN CALL ON AMBASSADOR MARCH 26, DOMINGO SANTA MARIA (FORMER
AMBASSADOR TO U.S. DURING FREI ADMINISTRATION) GAVE I.O. COPY
OF STILL UNPUBLISHED LETTERS BETWEEN SWETT AND HASBUN. SANTA
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MARIA SAID SITUATION AT CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY TV CHANNEL 13 VERY

TENSE AND HIS UNDERSTANDING JUNTA PRES GENERAL PINOCHET HAD CALLED HASBUN FOR TALKS. LATER SAME NIGHT CHANNEL 13 ANNOUNCED HASBUN RESIGNATION ALONG WITH ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER OMAR PABST AND PERSONNEL CHIEF JUAN PABLO ROMAN. EL MERCURIO CARRIES BRIEF NOTE TODAY MENTIONING RESIGNATIONS AND STATING THAT RECTOR SWETT HAS ASSUMED CONTROL OF CHANNEL 13.

3. SWETT LETTER TO HASBUN DATED MARCH 19 BEGINS BY PRAISING BATTLE WAGED BY CHANNEL 13 DURING ALLENDE YEARS. LETTER MOVES SWIFTLY TO CRITICAL TONE STATING "NOBODY CAN LIVE ON PAST GLORIES" AND TV "AUDIENCE HAS FALLEN CONSIDERABLY." LATTER RELATED BY SWETT TO HIS IMPRESSION OF GROWING INDEPENDENCE OF CHANNEL FROM RECTORATE. THEN PROCEEDS TO REGISTER SERIES OF GRIEVANCES CLAIMING CHANNEL NOT FOLLOWING ORDERS OR PROPER PROCEDURES.

3. SWETT NEXT POINTS OUT THAT HASBUN AS DIRECTOR HAS RESPONSIBILITY OF CARRYING OUT POLICY THAT ONLY HE, SWETT AS RECTOR, HAS AUTHORITY TO SET. REFERS TO HIS INTERPRETATION OF AUTHORITY (N.B. SWETT RETIRED ADMIRAL) AND GREAT RESPONSIBILITY JUNTA HAS CONFIDED IN HIM. SWETT THEN LAYS DOWN SEVEN POINT PROGRAM WHICH HE ORDERS HASBUN TO CARRY OUT "FOR FUTURE GOOD OF CHANNEL." MAIN POINTS REQUIRE "IMMEDIATE RESTRUCTURING OF PRESS DEPT" AND LIST OF NEW PROPOSED PRESS PERSONNEL WITHIN 15 DAYS; IMMEDIATE FIRING OF PERSONNEL CHIEF JUAN PABLO ROMAN; COMPLETE REORGANIZATION OF ENTIRE CHANNEL; AND SUBMISSION OF NEW PROGRAM SCHEDULE. LETTER ENDS WITH VEILED THREAT REMINDING HASBUN THAT HIS POSITION AS DIRECTOR OF CHANNEL 13 DEPENDS ON EXCLUSIVE CONFIDENCE OF RECTOR-DELEGATE.

4. HASBUN SIX-PAGE REPLY DATED MARCH 21 BEGINS STATING THAT SWETT'S LETTER BOTH "SURPRISING AND REVEALING," SAYING THAT IT CONTAINED LONG LIST OF ACCUSATIONS WITH SENTENCES ALREADY DETERMINED. HE ATTACKS LETTER AS LACKING IN LOGIC AND REFUTES, POINT BY POINT, THE PURPORTEDLY UNSUBSTANTIATED CHARGES LEVELLED BY SWETT STATING THAT NOT ONCE DURING THE PAST SIX MONTHS DID SWETT EVEN SO MUCH AS MENTION ANY ITEMS RAISED IN HIS LETTER.

5. HASBUN CONTINUES THAT FOREGOING "SURPRISING AS IT IS, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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APPEARS IRRELEVANT WHEN COMPARED WITH INSTRUCTIONS YOU CONSIDER INDISPENSABLE FOR FUTURE GOOD OF CHANNEL 13." STRENUOUSLY DEFENDS ROMAN AND OTHERS DISCHARGED, AND CHARACTERIZES SWETT'S ORDERS AS "ARBITRARY, OUT OF TUNE WITH SPIRIT OF CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY AND HUMANIST, CHRISTIAN, OBJECTIVE AND IMPERSONAL PHILOSOPHY OF JUNTA." SAYS HE CANNOT CARRY OUT SUCH ORDERS. DENOUNCES SWETT ACTION AS CONCESSION TO GROUPS AVID FOR POWER AND AS UNWORTHY, DISINGENUOUS PLOY. CONCLUDES BY STATING THAT

AS CITIZEN, ACADEMICIAN AND CATHOLIC HE IS DISTRIBUTING LETTER TO MEMBERS OF THE JUNTA, THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, THE CARDINAL AND THE PAPAL NUNCIO.

6. BY COINCIDENCE AMBASSADOR RECEIVED COURTESY CALL FROM RECTOR SWETT AFTERNOON MARCH 27 FOR PURPOSE OF PRESENTING COPIES OF NEW CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY ASTRONOMICAL ATLAS TO BE DELIVERED TO LEADING AMERICAN ASTRONOMERS. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION AFTER PRESENTATION AMBASSADOR RAISED PROBLEM WITH SWETT, POINTING OUT THAT REACTION IN US MIGHT BE UNFORTUNATE IF HASBUN OUSTER SHOULD RESULT IN OPEN CONTROVERSY BETWEEN JUNTA AND CHURCH.

7. SWETT SAID PROBLEM WAS NOT POLITICAL BUT ORGANIZATIONAL: FATHER FATHER HASBUN WAS CRUSADING CHARACTER WHO SERVED USEFUL PURPOSE DURING ALLENDE REGIME BUT NOW INSISTED ON OPERATING CHANNEL 13 AS A LAW UNTO HIMSELF. CLAIMED HASBUN WOULD TAKE NO DIRECTION FROM OUTSIDE AUTHORITY AND HAS VASTLY OVER-STAFFED STATION (350 EMPLOYEES). SAID SITUATION HAD REACHED POINT WHERE EITHER SWETT OR HASBUN MUST GO, SINCE HASBUN HAD PRECIPITATED MAJOR CRISIS BY CIRCULATING HIS INSULTING LETTER THROUGHOUT SANTIAGO. ADDED THAT JUNTA, TOO, WAS WORRIED BY PROSPECT OF CONTROVERSY WITH CHURCH.

8. COMMENT: CHANNEL 13 PROBLEM SURFACES CONFLICT LONG BREWING BETWEEN MILITARY REPRESENTATIVES AND CIVILIANS OF CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY WHO FOUGHT MARXIST ALLENDE REGIME FOR THREE YEARS. HASBUN IN PARTICULAR HAD BECOME A CENTER OF VOCAL OPPOSITION DURING LAST YEARS UP GOVERNMENT AND GAINED ADMIRATION AMONG CHILEANS FOR COURAGE, OUTSPOKENNESS AND COMBATIVE SPIRIT. HE WAS ALSO OBJECT OF MANY FAVORABLE POST-COUP LETTERS TO EDITORS WHEN LOCAL BISHOP CHALLENGED HIM AS LACKING IN CHARITY TOWARDS FALLEN FOLLOWERS OF UP. HASBUN IS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITH CARDINAL RAUL SILVA, IN WHOSE HOME HE LIVES. THUS FAR CARDINAL HAS NOT SPOKEN OUT, BUT INCIDENT COULD LEAD TO MORE SERIOUS SPLIT BETWEEN JUNTA AND CATHOLIC HIERARCHY. CHILE BISHOPS CONFERENCE SCHEDULED FOR NEXT WEEK, AND ISSUE MAY BE RAISED AT THAT SESSION.

9. COPIES OF BOTH LETTERS CIRCULATING IN SANTIAGO IN MIMOGRAPHED FORM AND PROBABLY ALREADY IN HANDS OF FOREIGN AND US PRESS. THERE IS SPECULATION THAT ULTRA-CONSERVATIVE ADVISERS TO JUNTA AND SWETT OUT TO ELIMINATE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDC) INFLUENCE FROM KEY POSITIONS INCLUDING MEDIA; MAJORITY OF THOSE INVOLVED AT CHANNEL 13 KNOWN TO BE PDC MEMBERS OR SYMPATHIZERS. PRESS CHIEF AT CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF VALPARAISO TV CHANNEL 4 TOLD INFORMATION OFFICER LAST WEEK THAT RUMOR CIRCULATING THAT MOVE AFOOT TO REMOVE PRESS CHIEFS OF ALL

FOUR CHILEAN TV CHANNELS SINCE THEY ALSO PDC MEMBERS OR
SUPPORTERS. THUS, TEST OF STRENGTH BETWEEN JUNTA ON ONE SIDE,
AND CATHOLIC-PDC ELEMENTS ON OTHER, COULD TAKE PLACE. ON
BALANCE EMBASSY BELIEVES, HOWEVER, THAT LATTER ARE NEITHER ABLE
NOR WILLING TO CHALLENGE JUNTA DIRECTLY AT THIS JUNCTURE
IF IT BACKS SWETT.
POPPER

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